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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights trends in values education in public secondary schools, crucial issues in both religious and secular values education, and effective strategies for teaching values in formal and invisible curricula. A review of the history of values education in the public schools is accompanied by relevant research pertaining to the "establishment clause" of the First Amendment and Supreme Court cases. The current debate over values education is updated with specific cases in Pennsylvania schools. The strategies for teaching values education include: (1) educating the whole person by focusing on student knowledge, behavior and feeling; (2) choosing content that honors and rewards virtue in exemplars, and encouraging reflection on values content; (3) using quotes, pledges, codes, and guideline; (4) communicating clearly, consistently, sincerely, with high expectation for all students; (5) developing student skills in resisting peer pressure, maintaining self-respect, and resolving conflicts in nonviolent ways; (6) being a good role model through positive personal example; (7) using and requiring respectful language; (8) using the creation of and even-handed enforcement of just classroom rules to teach core values (compassion, courage, courtesy, fairness, honesty, kindness, loyalty, perseverance, respect and responsibility); (9) reinforcing the diligent work and virtuous behavior of students with praise and appreciation; (10) correcting unethical, immoral, and disrespectful behavior, or become an enabler; (11) having students work together cooperatively in heterogeneous groups; (12) involving peers, parents and community; (13) encouraging student involvement in community service; and (14) teaching, not preaching. (EH)

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VALUES EDUCATION IN AMERICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Kutztown University Education Conference
Character Education: Teaching Values in Today's Society
September 16, 1994

This paper highlights trends in character education in American public secondary schools, crucial issues in both religious and secular values education, and effective strategies for teaching values in formal and invisible curricula.

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Character education is at least as old as recorded history. Its advent probably coincides with the beginning of civilization, for it is difficult to sustain a civilization without it. Historically, civilizations have passed their cultural values to succeeding generations as a means of cultural preservation. More than two millennia have passed since Aristotle referred to "virtues" and self-discipline. For Aristotle good habits, the regular display of these "virtues," constituted good character. The development of good character is at the heart of values education programs.

American schools are grounded in the tradition of transferring our basic values to our children. Since the revolutionary era, when our founding fathers emphasized republican virtue, values education has been important in America. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and other prominent leaders advocated an enlarged and dynamic system of public education to transmit this virtue to future generations. They believed that the success of their new nation was dependent upon the transmission of democratic values to its citizenry. In the ninteenth century, as waves of immigrants entered the U.S. from nations without democratic tradition, even greater emphasis was placed upon the transmission of citizenship values in our schools. (Wynne, 1989)

Character education was part of the educational program of virtually every school in America in the early decades of the 20th century. Since then the emphasis has been reduced greatly. By the 1950's formal character education curricular programs had almost disappeared from American schools (Mc Clellan, 1992; Yulish, 1980).

The decline of character education curricular programs may have been precipitated by research conducted between 1924 and 1929 at Teachers College, Columbia University. This inquiry by the Institute of Social and Religious Research was the most comprehensive study of character education in America. It assessed the character-related behavior of more than 10,000 middle-level

students from 23 U.S. communities. The focus was on deceit and service. The investigation determined that deceit depended upon the situation. No relationship was discovered between membership in organizations which taught honesty and honest behavior. The results of this study led many educators to conclude that formal character education programs were ineffective (Hartshorne & May, 1930).

The decline of character education in America may have been related to the acceptance of scientific thinking as well as to research. Morality was relativized and individualized as the philosophy of logical positivism took hold in twentieth-century America. Logical positivism made a radical distinction between subjective values and facts which could be proven scientifically. Posivitists believed it possible to structure knowledge that was objective and beyond the influence of human values. They considered values expressions of feeling and not objective truth. All knowledge, including values, was seen as changing, situational, and relative. Morality was portrayed by positivists as personal, dependent upon unscientific value judgments, and inappropriate for schools to transmit (Lickona, 1993).

The rise of cultural pluralism and a series of decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court also contributed to the decline of values education. Emphasis placed by the high court on the "establishment clause" of the First Amendment effectively curtailed the direct teaching of religious values in public schools. Fear of violating the wall of separation between church and state then caused educators in the public schools either to neglect moral education or to institute character education programs which were morally neutral.

The turbulent 1960's marked a revival of character education as two new programs, values clarification and moral reasoning, were introduced in American schools. Although different in many ways, both approaches stressed that teachers, as facilitators of discussion, were not to impose personal or societal values on their students.

In the moral dilemma discussion approach, developed by Lawrence Kohlberg, teachers assisted students in resolving moral conflicts, facilitated student reasoning, and ensured that discussions took place in environmental conditions conducive to stage growth in moral reasoning. Kohlberg's cognitive focus on moral reasoning, however, neglected the behavioral and emotional components of character.

Values clarification, the most popular character education program of the 1970's, sought to have students clarify their personal values by following a seven step valuing process. In values clarification teachers were non-judgmental of student values. For fear of influencing students, teachers were to respect whatever values the students arrived at. Values clarification came under heavy criticism, however, because it failed to differentiate between personal preference and moral values. No distinction was made between right and wrong; values were clarified not taught.

Research into the effectiveness of values clarification and moral reasoning curricula indicates that both programs have some effect on student thinking. Neither program, however, appears to be effective in influencing student behavior (Leming, 1993).

In response to growing problems of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and AIDS, drug and sex education programs have been most popular in the 1980's and in the 1990's. Three phases to drug education evolved: scare tactics on the harmful effects of drugs; affective programs to develop positive health-related attitudes; and social influence programs which develop student skills to resist peer and other social pressures. Research indicates that the first two approaches do increase student knowledge but have little effect on drug and alcohol abuse. Peer-centered social influence programs appear to be most effective in reducing the incidence of drug usage. Research on sex education indicates that students gain knowledge about sexuality and tend to become more tolerant of sexual

practices of others, but neither their values nor their sexual behavior is changed by most programs. Only value-based sex education involving schools, parents, and community shows some potential for affecting student attitudes and promoting responsible sexual behavior (Leming, 1993).

Historically, character education has been emphasized when educators and the public view social stability as threatened and moral standards weakened. Such is the American mood of the 1990's as concerns about crime, gang violence, and juvenile delinquency have taken center stage.

In the 1994 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, conducted by Phi Delta Kappa, three questions were asked concerning public support for character education. Responses to the poll indicate a strong and growing public support for character education. A majority of respondents favored courses on values and ethical behavior in the public schools, up from 1987. More than 90% of those surveyed favored the teaching of core values. Two thirds of the subjects favored nondevotional instruction about world religions (Elam, Lowell & Rose, 1994).

Character education is again being emphasized, and we are confronted by the great dilemma of values education. Should we attempt to teach values and risk imposing personal values on our students? If we include values in the formal curriculum, whose values do we teach and whose responsibility is it to teach them? We do not want to undermine home or church, yet we observe student behavior which indicates that not all students have internalized honesty, integrity, cooperation, and ethical judgment through those institutions. How shall we teach values, and how shall we prepare future teachers for their professional practice in the affective domain? And what academic freedom do we really have when it comes to values education?

A central question in values education is whether to transmit social values which distinguish right from wrong or to allow students to form their own values external to school. Character education implies adult authority and the transfer of values held by adults to students. Supporters of the great tradition in character education contend that it is inevitable and proper for adults to shape the principle values of youth. Some educators however, object to the traditional approach to character education as a type of brain washing or mind control. They emphasize values clarification, moral reasoning, and consensus formation. These programs invite students to make values-related choices and to play a central role in decision making. The question is whether to teach virtues and proper behavior or to allow students to decide for themselves what is right and wrong (Wynne, 1989).

Educators who choose to implement character education programs attempt to focus on core values which are universally accepted by all cultures. Gibbs and Earley (1994) identify these core values as compassion, courage, courtesy, fairness, honesty, kindness, loyalty, perseverance, respect, and responsibility. They define values as sets of ideas, standards, or goals held or accepted by a group or by an individual which establish patterns of behavior to enhance a group's survival.

Thomas Lickona (1993) articulated a strong and eloquent argument for the teaching of core values when he wrote:

> Such values affirm our human dignity, promote the good of the individual and the common good, and protect our human rights. They meet the classic ethical tests of reversibility (would you want to be treated this way?) and universalizability (would you want all persons to act this way in a similar situation?). They define our responsibilities in a democracy, and they are recognized by all civilized people and taught by all enlightened creeds. Not to teach children these core ethical values is a grave moral failure (p.9).

Values need not be taught directly through character education curricula. Embedded in typical academic programs are many elements of character formation.

Students are taught values through the formal curriculum, especially in literature, social science, and history classes. The celebration of certain holidays and the Pledge of Allegiance teach values. Expectations for students to work hard, act responsibly, and respect others are ways of teaching values. Many academic courses can be designed to teach values both directly and indirectly.

Many cocurricular activities such as dramatics, clubs, sports, student government, and community service activities also provide opportunities for students to make values choices. Most cocurricular programs have strong character education components which encourage students to practice values such as initiative, diligence, loyalty, tact, generosity, altruism, and courage (Wynne, 1989).

Values are taught both directly and indirectly in our schools. What appears to be missing from most efforts, however, is a whole person focus on the mind, body, spirit synergism. Lickona (1993) points out that character education which is strictly intellectual misses the crucial emotional side of character which acts as a bridge between judgment and action. According to Lickona good character consists of knowing what is right, wanting to do the right thing, and doing what is right. He emphasizes that effective character education must help children to understand the core values, adopt or commit to them, and act upon core values in their personal lives.

Core values, although rooted in world religions, are secular values which come from man rather than from God. Some fundamentalist religious groups object to the teaching of core values as secular humanism because their divine source is not revealed. For public school educators even the teaching of core values can become contentious when character education is attacked as advocating secular humanism.

Goble and Brooks (1983) argue, however, that it is possible to conduct character education separate from religion which does not conflict with church

teachings. They point out that a person can be both Roman Catholic and confucian. Confucianism is a moral philosophy rather than a religion, and it's principles are compatible with those of the Catholic Church.

When dealing with religious parents public school teachers need to solicit their support in the same way that they seek the support of all parents. Michael Ebert (1994) emphasizes that religious parents with children in public schools want to be partners, not adversaries of teachers. Religious parents are concerned about preparing children to be productive citizens, but they also are concerned about school undermining the established moral belief system of their children.

Robert Simonds (1994), president of the conservative parents group Citizens for Excellence in Education (C.E.E.), calls for a return to moral education in all subjects. He criticizes the perceived neutrality of public schools in religion and morals. Simonds contends that public schools have cleansed curriculum of religious and ethical content in their efforts not to offend anyone. He believes that America has a well-established set of ethical and moral standards, based upon the Ten Commandments and embodied in Old English Common Law, which should be transmitted in public schools. C.E.E., which has grown from 50 to more than 200,000 parents in the past decade, advocates teaching basic academic skills with an emphasis on the cognitive domain as well as patriotism, democracy, and our American culture. The group, which is pro public education, views character development and discipline as essential to quality education. The C.E.E. has come out against most school reforms such as affective education aimed at psychological, social, and behavioral change. It is opposed to global, multicultural, AIDS, and Sex education in public schools. C.E.E. also opposes the popular outcomes based education now sweeping the nation.

Values outcomes, proposed here recently in Pennsylvania's Chapter Five Curriculum Regulations for basic education, raised a firestorm of protest

from several interest groups who mounted impassioned opposition to Outcomes-Based Education. The Pennsylvania controversy was sparked by the proposed teaching of explicit values and the anticipated measurement of values outcomes. Parents feared that state mandated moral values would infringe on the domain of the family, undermine morality taught in the home, and invade the privacy of both students and families. Religious groups expressed concern that requiring students to demonstrate "adaptability to change" and "appreciation and understanding of others" would confer tolerance, recognition, and legitimacy on unacceptable lifestyles. Politicians railed against state mind control, the the imposition of politically correct values, and a school-imposed group morality on a diverse population. Teachers wondered how they were to evaluate the personal feelings, attitudes, and emotions of their students as "outcomes". Most vocal opposition spoke out against teaching specific behaviors and attitudes. Pennsylvania reformers eventually were forced to eliminate the explicit teaching of values outcomes from revised curriculum regulations.

The question of parental rights versus the academic freedom of public school teachers to teach values reached new extremes in the Octorara Area School District at Atglen, PA in 1993. A proposed school board policy would have given parents the right to review curricula and to withdraw their children from programs not matching parental beliefs. All instruction outside of board-approved curricula would have required written parental consent. The policy stated that "parents have the right to assure that their children's beliefs and moral values are not undermined by the schools." Teachers argued that the proposed policy would force them to censor lessons and to ignore students who lied, cheated, fought, and stole because correcting them would involve teaching values. Amid growing public opposition the board dropped its ill conceived policy. This extreme example emphasizes the controversial nature of values education. The teaching of values has been and

surely will continue to be contentious, but it is a responsibility which in good conscience we as educators cannot avoid and must not abdicate.

Value-free curricula, if possible, might silence some of the critics of character education. Yet we know very well that our teaching profession is value laden. In our every action as role models and as authority figures we convey ethical principles to our students. In this invisible curriculum, which no teacher explicitly teaches but which all students learn, values are central. Through personal example, reinforcement of student behavior, selection of subject matter, and the design of a just school environment we can continue to transmit values in the way which great teachers always have done.

Research indicates that learning environment, often referred to as part of the invisible curriculum, can have a positive effect on student prosocial values. For example, students working in cooperative learning groups demonstrate greater mutual concern for one another. They are more accepting of students with disabilities, and they learn to interact better with students of other racial and ethnic groups through cooperative learning activities (Johnson 1981, Slavin 1990).

A synthesis of the character education research reveals several shared characteristics of schools that seem to have a strong positive impact on the development of student values. Students are encouraged to participate in the life of their school. Students are expected to behave responsibly, and they are provided with the opportunity to do so. In these schools students accept discipline as legitimate within the framework of shared group norms and change their behavior accordingly. Good character is fostered by orderly school and classroom environments and by clear rules which are fairly enforced. The research suggests that discipline, which students may help to establish, is an essential element in effective moral education (Leming 1993).

Research which investigates values education from the perspective of the student also sheds important light on character education. Key insights are indicated by students. To effectively teach character education teachers must follow the rules and show respect for all students. "Do as I say, not as I do" definitely does not work. Students say that model teachers earn respect by being fair, genuine, hard-working, caring, and good listeners. They communicate clear, consistent, and sincere messages and high expectations. Through their actions they communicate their commitment and high expectations for their students. Students believe that what a teacher does is more important that what a teacher says. To them actions clearly speak louder than words (Williams, 1993).

Research also reveals a major problem with values education. Although character education is often used in an attempt to promote good behavior, no direct link between values and behavior has been identified. In fact, values play a small role in predicting behavior (Lockwood, 1993). Unfortunately, people do not seem to have the courage to live by their convictions. To change behavior it might be more productive to focus on behavior modification which may affect values as well. It has been suggested that people think as they act, that attitudes follow behavior (Ben, 1970).

Another problem is specific to secondary schools. Educators at the secondary level often are reluctant to become involved in character education. Even though most irresponsible acts are committed by adolescents and by adults, most values education programs are concentrated at the elementary level.

Perhaps character education is targeted at the elementary level because it is widely recognized that values are learned at a very young age. Some child psychologists maintain that our basic personality is formed by age three or four. Most agree that children come to school with their values well established. These values, which are modified throughout life, become more

resistant to change as people mature. Goble and Brooks (1983) contend that most children, by the time they reach junior high school age, have acquired values to a point where the needed approach shifts from prevention to rehabilitation for those who have internalized negative values. They believe that for character education to be effective at the secondary level students must be taught to change negative attitudes into positive attitudes. But psychiatrist William Glasser (1965), author of Reality Therapy, insists that it is never too late to teach values which strengthen character. He concludes that "the teaching of responsibility is the most important task of all higher animals... That it can be taught only to the young is not true...Responsibility can be learned at any age" (p. 43).

There is no doubt that character education becomes more complex and perhaps less efficient as students become more mature. To effectively transmit positive values which enhance the character of secondary students we need teaching strategies equal to the challenge.

Howard Kirschenbaum, speaking at the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development's 1994 Annual Conference, identified four strategies for teaching values. He observed that as well as teaching about values, teachers can demonstrate good values, teach skills for acting ethically and morally, and encourage young people to internalize values and make their own good decisions. Teachers, as good role models, who set a positive example and share their convictions on core values can have a positive effect on their students. Skills include how to resist peer pressure, maintain self-respect, resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways, and stand up for what one believes in. By giving students opportunities to make choices and to respond to moral issues teachers allow students to apply the principles which they are learning. When developing strategies for character education Kirschenbaum cautioned that educators need to teach values in conjunction with parents and the larger community.

From research and from experience we have learned that character education can be effective in transmitting core values in secondary schools. By integrating character education into all courses and by teaching values through the invisible curriculum we can avoid the divisiveness usually associated with specific character education programs. For teachers in secondary schools the following strategies are recommended:

Recommendations to Teachers for the Teaching of
Values in Secondary Schools

- Educate the whole person by focusing on student knowledge, behavior, and feeling

- Choose content which honors and rewards virtue in exemplars, and encourage reflection on values content

- Use quotes, pledges, codes, and guidelines

- Communicate clear, consistent, sincere, high expectations for students

- Develop student skills in resisting peer pressure, maintaining self-respect, and resolving conflicts in nonviolent ways

- Be a good role model through positive personal example

- Use and require respectful language

- Use the creation of and even-handed enforcement of just classroom rules to teach core values (compassion, courage, courtesy, fairness, honesty, kindness, loyalty, perseverance, respect, and responsibility)

- Reinforce the diligent work and virtuous behavior of students with praise and appreciation

- Correct unethical, immoral, and disrespectful behavior; or become an enabler

- Have students work together cooperatively in heterogeneous groups

- Involve peers, parents, and community

- Encourage student involvement in community service

- Teach, don't preach

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